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Secretary David Shulkin Announces Establishment of Office of Accountability and Whistleblower Protection

and Names Peter O'Rourke as its Senior Advisor and Executive Director

WASHINGTON -- Today U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Secretary David Shulkin announced that he has established the Office of Accountability and Whistleblower Protection in the Department, and that Peter O'Rourke will serve as Senior Advisor and Executive Director of the Office, reporting directly to the Secretary.

This announcement implements the requirements in President Trump's Executive Order signed at the Department on April 27, 2017 in one third of the 45-day timeframe required by the Order.

As detailed in the Executive Order, the Executive Director will:

- Advise and assist the Secretary in using, as appropriate, all available authorities to discipline or terminate any VA manager or employee who has violated the public's trust and failed to carry out his or her duties on behalf of Veterans.
- Advise and assist the Secretary in recruiting, rewarding, and retaining high-performing employees.
- Identify statutory barriers to the Secretary's authority to discipline or terminate any employee who has jeopardized the health, safety, or well-being of a Veteran and to recruit, reward, or retain high-performing employee and report such barriers to the Secretary for consideration as to the need for legislative changes.
- Work closely with relevant VA components to ensure swift and effective resolution of Veterans' complaints of wrongdoing at VA.
- Work closely with relevant VA components to ensure adequate investigation and correction of wrongdoing throughout the VA, and protect employees who lawfully disclose wrongdoing from retaliation.
- Consider redundancies and the possibility of combining the office with existing VA components to improve the VA's efficiency, effectiveness, or accountability.

O'Rourke is a veteran of both the US Navy and Air Force and has held executive roles in non-profit, consulting, and the federal government.

"I am pleased to announce the establishment of this office, fulfilling one of my highest priorities at the Department. We need to hold our employees accountable for their actions if they violate the public trust, and at the same time protect whistleblowers from retaliation," said Dr. Shulkin. "Setting up this office under the strong leadership of Peter O'Rourke will give us the tools to do just that."